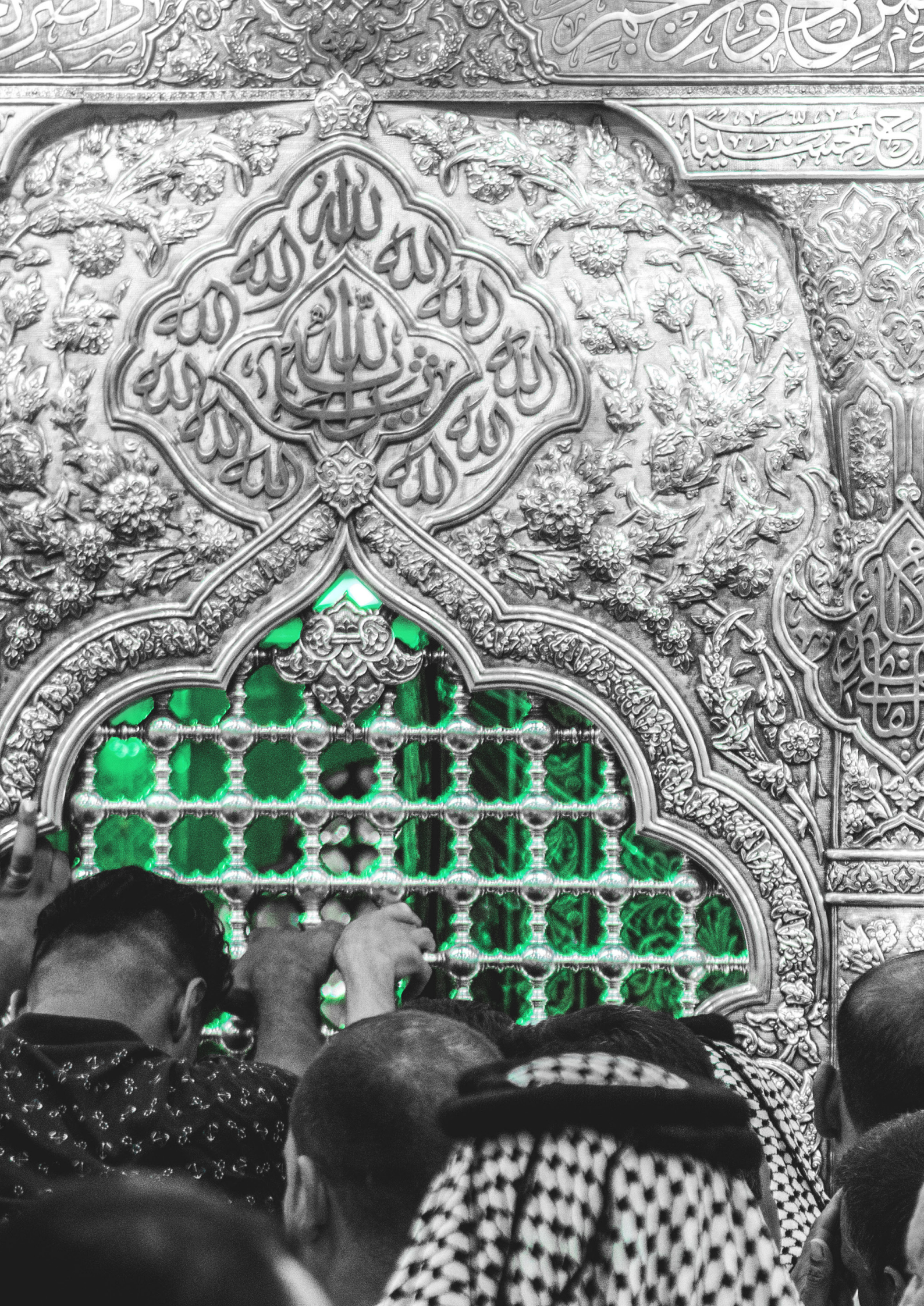




THE WARITH MAGAZINE

An Official Magazine of the Holy Shrine of Imam Hussain (as)







EDITORIAL

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

By the grace of God, we humbly present to the Imam of our time, the fourth and final issue for this year of The Warith Magazine.

In this issue the second part of the analysis of the connection between Imam Hussain (as) and the Imam of our time (af) according to the traditions of Ahl al-Bayt (as) is presented. A reflective piece on the life of Bibi Maryam (as) is aimed at younger readers, and another article undertakes a larger examination into the importance of role models. This issue also contains poetry and a question and answer section, which also leaves a question open for our readers to discuss at home with family and friends.

Many hands have worked together to bring the issue to fruition. I would like to thank our content contributors, editors, designers, artists and The Batool Foundation for their contributions

Dr. Zoheir Ali Esmail
Editor of The Warith Magazine





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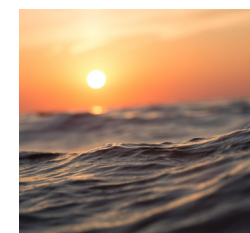
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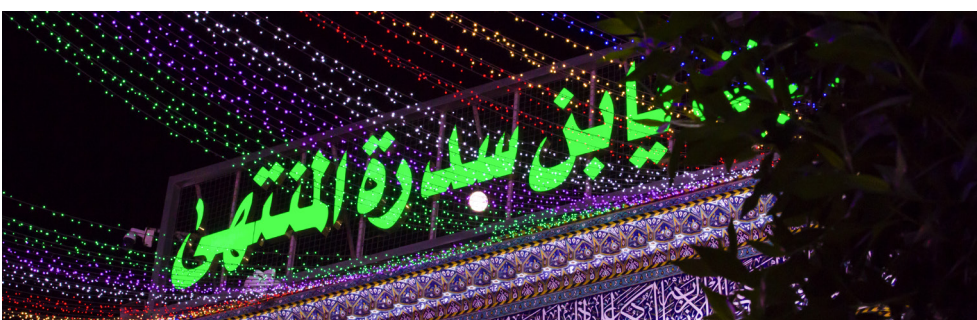
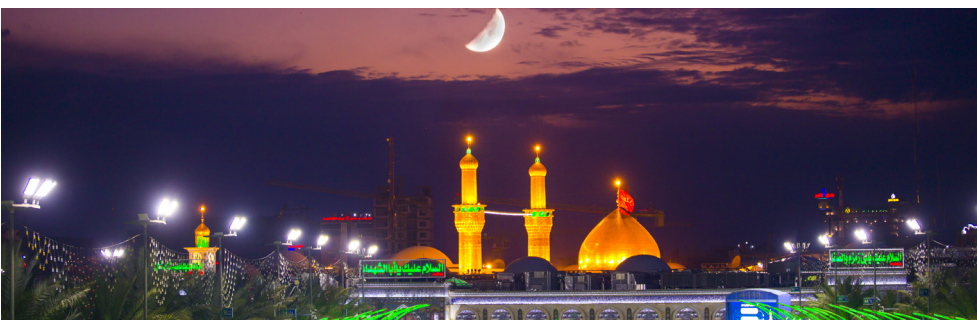
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مؤسسة البتول عليها السلام



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The Connection Between Imam Al-Mahdi (af) and Imam Hussain (as) Part 2

All twelve Imams from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s), are connected to each other and reflect the same light. However, the teachings and guidance of the Imams (as) vary according to the diversity of their situations and historical contexts.

For example, the peace treaty of Imam al-Hasan (as) differs from the uprising of Imam Hussain (as). This difference does not indicate that Imam Hussain (as) was braver than Imam al-Hasan (as). Due to the differing conditions in which they lived, they acted differently. In addition to the guidance provided by Prophet Muhammad (s) for 23 years, the Shi'as have also been guided by the leadership and wisdom of the Infallibles (as) after the death of the Holy Prophet (s) until 329 A.H, when the major occultation of Imam al-Mahdi (af) began.

Hence, guidance has been provided on how to act in differing conditions. Moreover, scholars who specialize in understanding the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (a) also lead the Muslim community when the community does not have direct access infallible leadership.

However, there is a special connection and affinity between Imam Hussain (as) and Imam al-Mahdi (af). Imam Hussain's (as) teachings and example clearly relate to what will happen at the End of Time (Akhir al-Zaman) when Imam al-Mahdi (af) reappears. My first paper on this subject included verses from the Holy Qur'an and ahadith demonstrating this connection. In the second paper, I explain why there is a close connection between Imam Hussain (as) and Imam al-Mahdi (af) and what role Imam Hussain's (as) principles and struggle will play in Imam al-Mahdi's (af) universal mission to establish justice.

Imam Hussain (as) as a central theme in Imam al-Mahdi's (af) movement

Imam al-Mahdi's (af) mission will include avenging the blood of Imam Hussain (as) as a primary objective. His universal movement will not only be relevant to Arabs, Iranians and people from the Indian subcontinent, but rather, it will embrace all of humanity.

However, if the mission of Imam al-Mahdi (af) is universal, why does seeking vengeance for the blood of Imam Hussain (as) play a pivotal role within this movement?



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He is currently the Founding Director of the International Institute for Islamic Studies in Qum, IRAN and the Director of Islamic Centre of England, London. Dr Shomali is editor-in-chief of two journals: the *Message of Thaqalayn: A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies* and the *Spiritual Quest: A Biannual Journal of Ethics and Spirituality*.

Dr Shomali is very interested and involved in interreligious dialogue and has organised or attended and presented papers in UK, USA, Canada, Italy, Austria, Greece, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Philippines and Sweden.

Arguably, if Imam al-Mahdi (af) appeared today and sought to avenge the crimes of both the killers of Imam Hussain (as) and those who approved of his murder, his actions may seem irrelevant to many people.

Many people have no affiliation or understanding of the mission of Imam Hussain (as). How many people today consider themselves either supporters or enemies of Imam Hussain (as)? Most people do not even know about Imam Hussain (as) and therefore, neither support nor oppose him and his movement.

Therefore, unless the current state of global ignorance and apathy pertaining to Imam Hussain (as) changes, Imam al-Mahdi's (af) central reference to Imam Hussain's (as) mission when he reappears, will not seem relevant to the global community. It might be said that there are people today who seem to support Yazid. For example, they praise Yazid or attack those who perform the ziyarat of Imam Hussain (as). Therefore, these people may be considered enemies of Imam al-Mahdi (af). However, I do not think this illustrates the entire picture. How important are these people? Although the crimes of ignorant people who kill themselves to kill others, is reprehensible by any standard, and whilst they are supporters of Yazid, they are not the main forces of evil today.

Thus the question arises: what steps should be taken to spread awareness of Imam Hussain (as) world-wide? How can a point of global awareness be reached such that the majority of the world's people either support or oppose Imam Hussain (as)? It is my humble understanding that once Imam Hussain (as) becomes a polarising force of conscience for the majority of the world's population, Imam al-Mahdi's advent will follow soon.

However, before delving deeper into this issue, it is important to first consider the integral role and position of justice in Islam.

The Importance of Justice in Islam

In Islam, justice is not a value and virtue equal in merit to other values and virtues. According to the school of Ahl al-Bayt (as), justice a paramount value. Divine justice is a principle of the Shi'a faith. However, to know and believe in God's justice is not enough; rather, we must strive to emulate divine justice within our personal and social lives.

According to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), justice is a prerequisite for every important social position. A political, spiritual, or prayer leader (especially the Friday prayer leader) must be just and knowledgeable. This is a distinction that many, if not all, scholars make. To lead prayers, it is sufficient for people to believe that you are just, even if you are not sure about your own level of justice or you do not believe that you are just. In this case, people can make the intention of congregational prayer whilst you make the intention of individual (furada) prayer. However, a Friday prayer leader must believe that he is just. If he does not consider himself just, he cannot undertake the leadership of Friday prayers. Judges and witnesses in a court must also be just.

It should be noted that ethicists, both Muslim and non-Muslim, divide all values into two groups. Some values are ethically correct and good in all cases whilst other values are not ethically appropriate in exceptional cases. For example, kindness is a virtue; however, sometimes kindness is ethically inappropriate, such as when a mother, out of kindness, allows her child to eat a desirable food that is harmful to the child's health, or allows her child to watch television when the child should be revising for a test. Constant kindness to children may result in spoiling them, thus negatively impacting their personalities. Kindness, like many other virtuous qualities, should be guided by wisdom and reflection.

However, justice is one value that all Shi'a scholars believe is virtuous and good in all cases without exception. Conversely, injustice and oppression is never ethically correct.

According to Islam, justice must be established internally and externally. Other schools of thought restrict justice to interpersonal relations, stipulating that justice should regulate all social relationships, whether between members of a family, society, or state. However, Islam calls upon believers to establish justice both in interpersonal and intrapersonal relations.

It is important for justice to be established within a human being, with respect to himself. If a person commits a sin, he has been unjust to himself:

“He who violates the boundaries that Allah has drawn and goes beyond them has oppressed himself (Qur'an 6:51).”

Hence, in Du'a Kumayl, we state, *'Our Lord, we have oppressed ourselves' and referring to our sins, we admit, 'I have done injustice to myself.'*

According to Islam, we do not have the right to be unjust even to ourselves. whether it is by harming our bodies, wasting our talents, or damaging our own reputation. We are also obliged to be fair and impartial in our attitude to others, refraining from any act of injustice.

The Holy Qur'an advises,

'...ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unfair.' (Qur'an 5:8)

For example, if the murderer of Imam Hussain (as) was alive today and put on trial, we would be religiously obligated to be just with him, regardless of him being our enemy.

Allah (swt) orders believers in the Holy Qur'an:

'Be fair; that is nearer to God-wariness.' (Qur'an 5:8)

In Islam, piety and justice are inseparable with respect to treatment of our own selves, each other, and even animals. Imam Ali (as), the paragon of justice, stated:

'If I am given seven continents and whatever is under their skies so that I would disobey Allah by taking a peal of wheat from the mouth of an ant, I would not do it (Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 224 and Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 40, p. 163, chapter 107, no.57).'

When Allah (swt) specifies the prophets' duties, He mentions the introduction of religious practices such as praying and fasting, purification of people's hearts through character education and the establishment of social justice. The latter duty is mentioned in the Qur'anic verse:

'Certainly, We have sent all the messengers with manifest truths and given them the book and scale so that people establish justice.' (Qur'an 57:25)

As implied in this verse, messengers were not sent to societies to miraculously establish justice; they were sent to guide people by providing specific instructions to uphold justice. Allah (swt) does not establish justice by way of miracles; miracles only serve to secure people's trust so that they believe in the prophets that seek to guide them. Once they have believed, believers then seek to uphold the principles of justice within their societies. True believers do not adopt the passive attitude of the people of Prophet Musa (as) who expected societal ills to be remedied through divine intervention and brazenly stated:

"Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight. We will be sitting right here" (Qur'an 5:24).

The prophets were sent to encourage people to strive hard to establish justice. Hence, the establishment of justice must be a fundamental and pivotal objective and foundation of a Muslim community.

Dignity

Another fundamental value in Islam is dignity. Many people believe that the right to life is the most essential and basic right human beings possess. However, in actual fact, the greatest right that human beings possess is the right to dignity. A person's dignity is more important than his physical life because a life filled with perpetual humiliation and indignity, is devoid of value and well-being. What is the value of a person's life if he is caged, treated like an animal and stripped of his dignity and self-respect as a human being? To live with dignity and self-respect is a higher and more fundamental need than mere survival. Therefore, for a just society to be established, not only must each person be granted the power and means to fulfil his basic requirements to live, he must also be granted a degree of honour and dignity. Dignity is an essential human right and it will be secured for all people when a just society is established under the leadership of Imam al-Mahdi (af).

Before the end of the world and the arrival of the Day of Judgement, a just and fair society in which the dignity of all human beings is upheld, will be achieved according to Allah's (swt) divine plan.

The Role Model for Establishing Justice

The only leader who will succeed in securing a life of dignity for all mankind is Imam al-Mahdi (af). As mentioned previously, rather than waiting for justice to be miraculously established, we must all work to create a just society. Whilst Imam al-Mahdi will be the leader of fair and just world, he will need helpers, supporters and followers, devoted and committed to aiding him in achieving this objective.

The true helpers of Imam al-Mahdi (af) will have first established justice in their own souls and hearts, and thereafter, in their interpersonal relations with the members of their community. They will then extend this relationship of justice to the wider, global community. Moreover, their committed application of justice will also encompass the natural environment and all living creatures. Those who epitomise justice in all aspects of their being and lives, will receive the honour of being accepted in the movement of Imam al-Mahdi (af), a movement that will establish a perfect system of global justice.

People who sincerely strive to establish justice and uphold human dignity, can find inspiration in the noble and pure example of Imam Hussain (as). Those who want to help Imam Zaman (af) by paving the way for his appearance and supporting him to achieve a perfect system of justice, cannot do so without seeking guidance from the movement and personality of Imam Hussain (as). Imam Hussain's (as) example guides us to the realisation that life is only valuable if it is lived with justice and dignity. On the Day of Ashura, Imam Hussain (as) recited the following lines of poetry concerning the value of human dignity and moral integrity:

***Death is better than losing your honour
And losing your honour is better than
going to Hell***

(Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 192, p. 196, vol. 45, p. 49 and p. 50 and vol. 75, p. 128).

Prior to the Battle of Ashura, Yazid ordered Imam Hussain (as) to pay him allegiance. Imam Hussain (as) knew that if he obeyed Yazid's orders, he would be granted the security to live in peace and freely teach and worship. However, Imam Hussain's (as) response to Yazid reflected the paramount value he placed on moral integrity and dignity:

'A person like me does not pay allegiance to someone like him'

(Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44. p. 324).

In this short, decisive statement, Imam Hussain (as) clarified that as a person who devoted his entire life to obeying Allah (swt), it would be morally disgraceful for him to give allegiance to Yazid, an openly immoral, unjust, and oppressive tyrant who was bent on corrupting and oppressing the society he ruled. Imam Hussain's (as) stance towards Yazid show us that a person's life is devoid of all value and worth if he sacrifices his integrity and dignity by swearing allegiance to an evil tyrant like Yazid. Imam Hussain (as) further states:

'Far from us is disgrace. God does not accept this for us. The Messenger and the believers would not be pleased with that. And those pure laps [on which I was brought up]' (Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 2, p. 300).

Hussain (as), the Best Source of Inspiration

Those who strive to establish justice should seek inspiration and guidance from the movement of Imam Hussain (as). No revolution occurred in the Shi'a world without reference to the example and mission of Imam Hussain (as). The movements led by Mukhtar, the Tawwabin and the people of Fakh all sought to follow the movement of Imam Hussain (as). Even non-Muslim reformers who were well-versed in the struggle of Imam Hussain (as), were inspired by him. Gandhi once said, 'I learnt from Hussain how to achieve victory while being oppressed.'

However, the question arises: whilst some reformers have been inspired by Imam Hussain (as), why have others not? The root of the answer to this question lies in the fact that many people remain ignorant and unaware of Imam Hussain's (as) unique personality and movement.

Whilst a few non-Shi'as and non-Muslims have stumbled upon an awareness of Imam Hussain (as) through their reading and conversations, there is currently no system or programme in place to introduce Imam Hussain (as) to the vast majority of the global population.

Many of us prefer to pay homage to Imam Hussain (as) within our own gatherings and restrict our remembrance to communal rituals and commemorations. We often think or act as though Shi'as hold exclusive rights to understanding, remembering and benefitting from the example of Imam Hussain (as). Moreover, if we profess a desire to promulgate the message of Imam Hussain (as) to the wider society, it is usually mere sloganeering. Sharing the beautiful and inspiring life and personality of Imam Hussain (as) with non-Shi'as is not a priority for us at all. We merely want to enjoy our gatherings of mourning according to the traditions with which we were raised. It really does not matter to us whether these traditions are accessible and beneficial in drawing others towards the message of Imam Hussain (as).

As the purest epitome and paragon of justice, Imam Hussain (as) remains the best source of inspiration for anyone who seeks to reinstate the rights and dignity of the oppressed. The depth and extent of Imam Hussain's (as) struggle to uphold justice and human dignity are unparalleled in human history. If Hussain (as) is not revered by the majority of human beings, it is because he is unknown to them. It is impossible for anyone who knows about the life and personality of Imam Hussain (as) to regard him as anything less than the purest and most devoted champion of justice. Is the struggle for justice of any noble leader in human history equal to Imam Hussain's (as)?!

It is clear that when Imam al-Mahdi (af) calls for the establishment of justice, he will refer to the uniquely pure and noble struggle of Imam Hussain (as). In connecting his movement to that of Imam Hussain (as), Imam al-Mahdi (af) will establish his unswerving commitment to struggle and sacrifice in the pursuit of social justice.

The Prerequisites

What prerequisites must be achieved before Imam al-Mahdi (af) can effectively introduce his movement as a Hussaini one? How can we prepare the foundations for the powerful speech Imam al-Mahdi (af) will give when he stands between the rukn and maqam of the Ka'ba and states, 'I am calling for the blood of Hussain to be compensated'?

Imam al-Mahdi (af) will only take this decisive step once Imam Hussain (as) is globally recognised as the epitome of justice and purest symbol of the

human struggle to overcome evil and oppression. In other words, the movement of Imam al-Mahdi (af) will only begin when the global struggle between the forces of good and evil is polarised around the human criterion of justice that is Imam Hussain (as).

When Imam al-Mahdi (af) leads the global struggle for justice, many non-Muslims from all parts of the globe, whose hearts are drawn to the purity of the Imam al-Mahdi's (af) mission, will join his ranks as his staunch supporters.

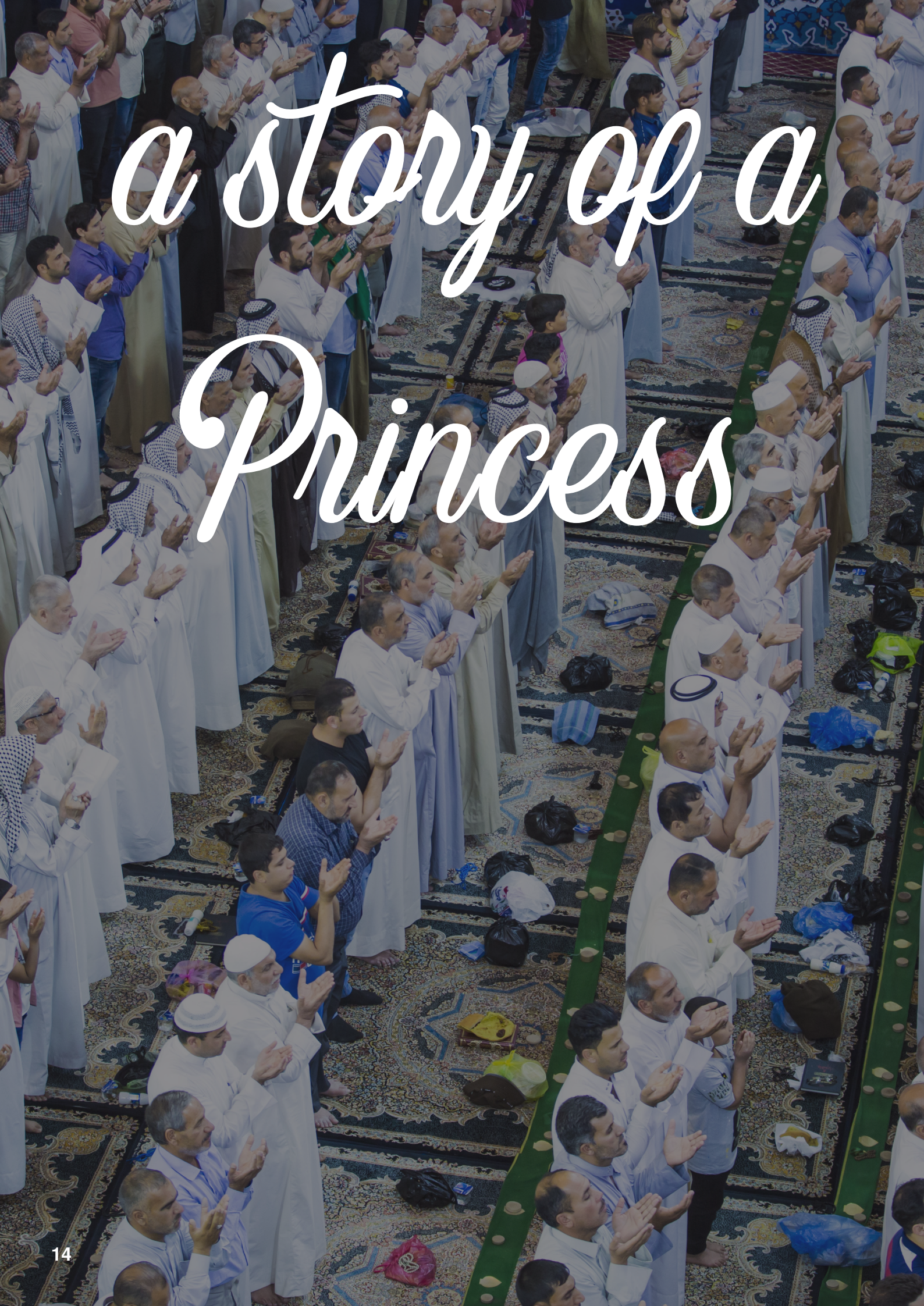
Imam al-Mahdi (af) will treat all people fairly and no-one will be deprived of his rights to justice and dignity. The principles of justice will direct and infuse every aspect of Imam al-Mahdi's (af) movement and struggle.

Sharing the Real Hussain (as) with Everyone

As noted above, prior to the onset of Imam al-Mahdi's (af) movement, awareness and understanding of the personality of Imam Hussain (as) must be widespread. Humanity must be polarised by their devotion or opposition to Imam Hussain (as) as the symbol of justice and virtue. Of course, the hearts of those who commit injustice and violate the rights of others, will be averse to both Imam Hussain (as) and Imam al-Mahdi (af).

Hence, it is imperative that we educate humanity about the true personality and example of Imam Hussain (as). It is not a matter of publishing a few books or booklets. Rather, we must purify our own understanding of Imam Hussain (as) from all distortions and present the true and correct representation of Imam Hussain (as) to the world. Not only should we disseminate correct information about Imam Hussain (as), we must first and foremost, reflect the true Hussain (as) in our speech and actions.

Imam al-Mahdi's (af) mission to establish justice and equity is deeply connected to Imam Hussain's (as) uprising against injustice and tyranny. Prior to the advent of Imam al-Mahdi (af), the overwhelming majority of human beings will know who Imam Hussain (as) was and what he stood for; those who struggle for justice will refer to him as their role model and those who support injustice will view him as an adversary. The more oppressive they are, the more they will align themselves with Yazid, his army, and the murder of Imam Hussain (as) and his family members and companions.

A high-angle photograph of a large crowd of men, mostly in white thobes and ghutras, performing a religious ceremony on a large, patterned rug. They are all clapping their hands in unison. The scene is filled with a sense of collective worship and devotion. The text "a story of a Princess" is overlaid in a white, cursive font across the center of the image.

a story of a Princess

She was a princess. Not your typical, everyday princess with all the wealth a girl can dream of. Neither was she in love with a prince, nor was she ever married or engaged. But her heart was committed and attached to the greatest Being. He was her Protector, Beloved, source of comfort and so much more than words can ever express. In fact, Lady Maryam's (as) heart melted in deep devotion to Allah (swt) alone.

She was truly in love. She knew He was the wealthiest, strongest, kindest and most gentle being of all. And she was blissfully happy. She found her happiness only in Him. Lady Maryam's (as) life revolved around Allah (swt), giving her a deep sense of purpose and identity. Through her worship, virtuous lifestyle, and patience in hardship, she reached a state of perfection, granted to her by Allah's (swt) grace. She was attached to nothing other than Allah (swt) and that is why she could calmly handle all of life's curve balls and quietly ride life's ups and downs.

She knew that each moment in life was planned by her Beloved to elevate her character and spirituality. And she desired nothing except to reach Him. She trusted Allah (swt) to take care of all her needs and He did. He sent her food from the heavens. He arranged for her to meet and talk with His angels. He sent Prophet Zakariya (as) to check up on her and be her guardian. So lofty and noble was her spiritual station that even Zakariya (as), a prophet of Allah (swt), took inspiration and lessons from her life.

Allah (swt) was Lady Maryam's (as) Hope, Saviour, Companion, Friend, Happiness, and true Beloved. He was always there when she called out to Him and He never let her down. He caught her when she stumbled, lifted her when she fell, and blessed her in innumerable ways. Her connection to Him was truly unique. Not even the angels could comprehend or emulate it. She was a princess of Jannah and famous amongst the angels. She was chosen by Allah (swt), purified by Him, and protected by His watchful eye at all times.

She was the Leader of the women of her time. Lady Maryam (as) was the daughter of Imran (as), a prophet of Allah (swt). Her name, Maryam, means worshipper or servant of the Lord. She was chosen by Allah (swt) to be His close servant and worshiped Him day and night.



Maryam Moaddel from the Los Angeles community, sister Maryam Moaddel graduated from Cal Poly Pomona with a B.S. in Accounting. After teaching at an Islamic school, she started to study at Jamiah al-Zahra in Qom. She completed her BA in philosophy and is currently working on her masters.

Before Maryam (as) was born, her mother had been told by her husband that from their marriage, a prophet would be born. Hence, when Maryam's (as) mother conceived, she expected the baby to be a boy and so she vowed to offer her child in the service of the house of worship in Jerusalem. Little did she know that it was not her child but her grandson who would be the prophet that Imran (as) had informed her about. When Lady Maryam (as) was born, her mother kept her vow, and when Maryam (as) reached a suitable age, she sent her to serve in the house of worship in Jerusalem.

Prophet Imran (as) passed away before Maryam (as) was born and so she became an orphan at birth. Isn't it interesting that the most purified people are always tested in the hardest ways? Our beloved Holy Prophet (s) was also an orphan. Sometimes we think that if we are struck with hardship, it is due to our sins. However, in struggling with life's challenges, we may be able to draw closer to Allah (swt). Even if the hardships are due to our sins, they may incline us towards repentance and seeking His forgiveness. So even in this case, challenges can help us to attain nearness to Allah (swt).

Growing up without a father was a challenging test for Lady Maryam (as). She also lost her mother when she was young, increasing her loneliness and sorrow. Yet this was Allah's (swt) way of freeing her heart from the love of others so that she could attach herself to Him. In fact, Lady Maryam (as) praised and worshipped Allah (swt) day and night. She knew that she was never alone and could never be alone when Allah (swt) was always by her side, watching over her, taking care of her, helping her, raising her, and guiding her. She understood that the rays of divine grace are innumerable because His love and mercy are infinite. The more she recognised how blessed she was by Allah (swt), the more grateful she felt towards Him.

Her example shows us why introspection and reflection are so important and valuable. The more we think deeply about Allah's (swt) grace and kindness towards us, the more we love Him. Our gratitude then motivates us to worship Him. Often we take our blessings for granted and we forget to thank Him. We forget how needy and weak we are, and we become oblivious of our dependence upon Him. Lady Maryam (as), however, was not like this. She deeply felt and understood her weaknesses and dependence upon Allah (swt) and so devoted every fibre of her being to His remembrance and servitude.

Lady Maryam (as) was truly blessed. But even with all the blessings she received and spiritual loftiness she reached, life was not easy. Like everyone else, she too was tested. In fact, her tests were more challenging than those most people face. It is due to Allah's (swt) mercy and wisdom that the higher one reaches spiritually and the closer one draws to Allah (swt), the more challenging and exacting his/her tests become.

Like a diamond that shines more brightly the more vigorously it is polished, Lady Maryam's (as) soul grew more pure and luminous as her hardships and challenges increased. Allah (swt) revealed to her through His angel that she would bear a child. This news greatly shocked her because she was an unmarried virgin. She asked the angel how she would conceive a child whilst she had never been touched by a man. The angel replied that Allah's (swt) will was definitive and absolute.

Like a diamond that shines more brightly the more vigorously it is polished, Lady Maryam's (as) soul grew more pure and luminous as her hardships and challenges increased.

As Lady Maryam (as) progressed in her pregnancy, she grew more and more concerned about her unblemished reputation. She worried that people would make false assumptions and slander her. She imagined the gossip that would spread. She feared her purity and integrity would be questioned and she would be unjustly accused.

Yet Lady Maryam (as) also knew that her pure reputation was divinely determined and granted to her as a blessing. Allah (swt) could change it or take it away at any moment according to His decree and wisdom. So if Allah (swt) wanted her to face the loss of respect and dignity, she would bear it patiently because both dignity and its loss were blessings from Him. Lady Maryam (as) knew Allah (swt) would plan and decree nothing but good for her. As the angels watched in awe and respect, she trusted Him with all her heart and never doubted His mercy and love. He was her Hope even when her society turned against her. After all, He was all that mattered.

Eventually, Lady Maryam's baby was born. She was blessed with the birth of Prophet Isa (as). Allah (swt) instructed her to go back to her people. Instead of speaking to them, she should point to the baby who would reply to them. Lady Maryam (as) was entrusted with a divine mission and she knew it well. It was her divine duty to go back to her people to show them Allah's (swt) miracle. The miraculous birth of Prophet Isa (as) would help people realise that anything was possible by Allah's (swt) power and will. Lady Maryam (as) was chosen for this special mission. A mission that would test people's faith and submission. How would they respond when they witnessed a child born without a father? Maryam (as) knew her community well enough to know how they would react towards the news.

But their accusations did not grieve her because the love of Allah (swt) ruled her heart and filled her with peace. Hence, submitting to His will was not difficult for her because she only cared about Allah's (swt) judgement and opinion and not those of people.

As she journeyed back to her community, she was strong and calm because she knew Allah (swt) was with her. When you are attached only to Allah (swt), nothing scares you. Your darkest fears dissolve because you know that the One who is in control of everything is by your side and closer to you than your jugular vein. What is there to fear when the One who has created fear is with you? Why worry about the fulfilment of your needs when the One who is al-Razzaq (the Provider) is with you?

Lady Maryam (as) returned to her people with her baby. Immediately, people began bombarding her with slanderous accusations. They accused her of being an immoral person who had committed a shameful and despicable sin. However, she stood calmly, steadfast in her faith in Allah (swt), her confidence unshaken. Lady Maryam (as) was calm because she knew she was supported by the most Mighty and Powerful. How wonderful it is to experience freedom from worldly attachments, firmly grasping the rope of Allah (swt)!

Lady Maryam (as) quietly pointed to her baby, Prophet Isa (as). Although he was a new-born baby, he began to speak to the people. Prophet Isa (as) told them that he was a prophet and a sign from Allah (swt). The people were confounded. A baby speaking in his cradle! It could only be a miracle from Allah (swt). It was a moment of truth, a moment that tested the people's faith in Allah (swt). Like Prophet Adam's (as) creation, Prophet Isa's (as) birth showed Allah's (swt) ability to create human beings in miraculous ways that do not follow natural biological laws and processes.

Both were clear manifestations of the power and greatness of Allah (swt).

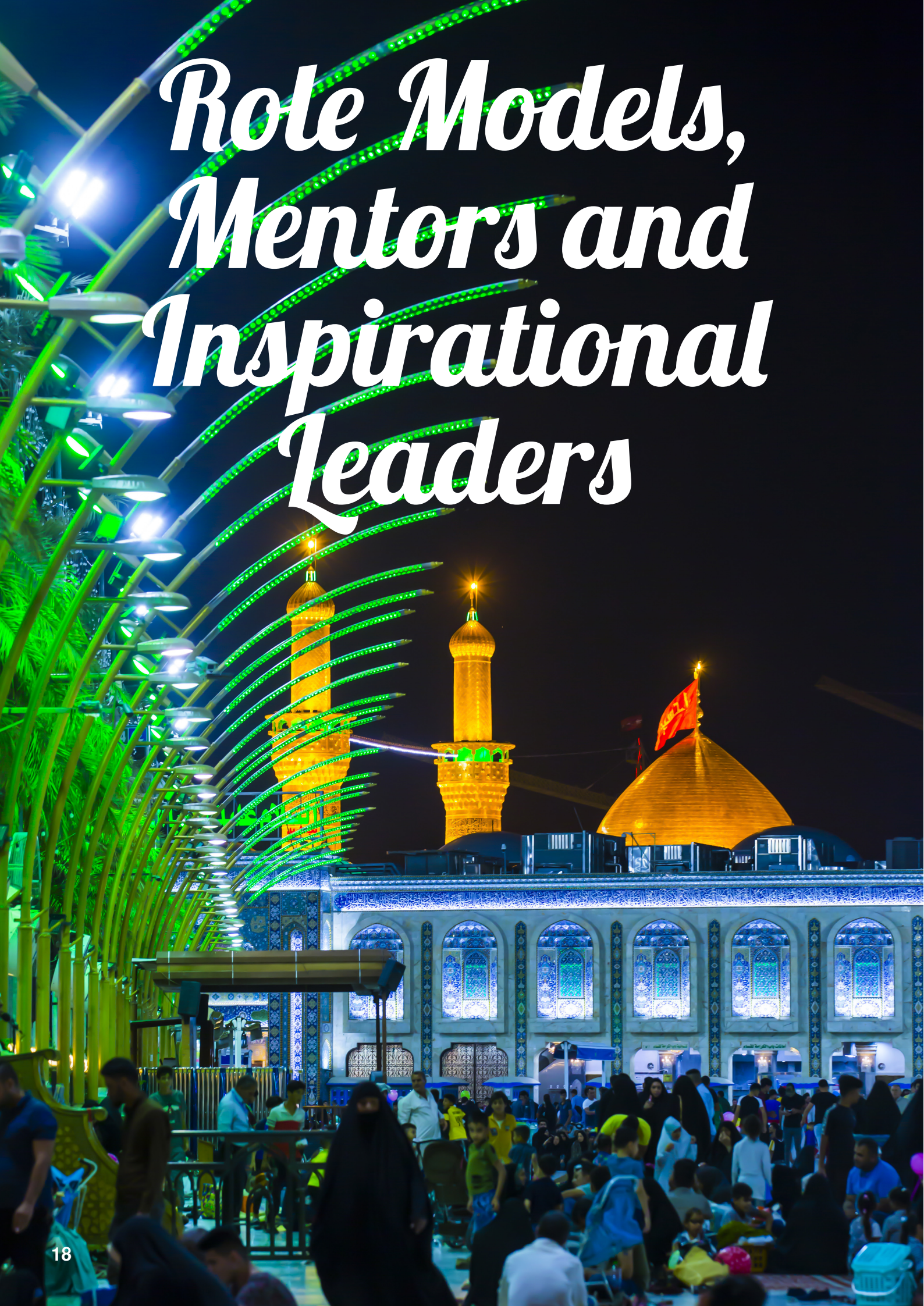
Maryam (as) was also a blessed sign of Allah's (swt) power and glory on earth. She was the moon in the dark night of her time, illuminating the path of purity and truth. She and her son were stars upon whom people gazed to find their way towards Allah (swt). Their light also shines today in the Qur'anic verses that exalt them. Indeed, Allah (swt) raises the station of those who devote their souls entirely to seeking His pleasure and enhances their honour and esteem in the eyes and hearts of mankind.

Lady Maryam's (as) story isn't a fairy-tale. It is a reality revealed to us through the divine verses of the Holy Qur'an. It inspires and guides us to progress in our own personal journey to Allah (swt). When we consider Lady Maryam's (as) challenging trials, we should imagine ourselves in her situation. How would we have felt? Would we be angry at the possibility of lost respect and reputation? Would we blame ourselves or Allah (swt)? How would we have acted and responded if Lady Maryam's (as) life struggles were ours? By reflecting on her inspiring life in a personal way, we can evaluate our strengths, recognise our weaknesses and strengthen our relationship with Allah (swt). Not only was Lady Maryam (as) a beacon of light for her own people, she is a pure, guiding light for us in our darkness today.

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Role Models, Mentors and Inspirational Leaders



Man innately aspires to better himself in all facets of his life. He strives to rise above the position in which he finds himself and reach a higher station. To achieve this, he looks around himself for inspiration and is impressed by those considered 'successful' by his fellow men. He imitates their example and emulates their mannerisms. In following their footsteps, he hopes to either reach or even surpass, the lofty character or position he believes they uphold.

The term, 'role model' was coined in the 20th century; however, the concept it denotes, is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, sculptures of champions, kings and even gods, were created in reverence and respect for those considered to be exalted examples and inspirational leaders. Not all idols were meant to be worshipped in the traditional sense of the word; some were created in tribute to the extraordinary achievements of mythical and historical figures and to inspire others to emulate their example.

Whilst few idols or statues are sculpted these days, leaders and celebrities are now revered by way of magazine covers, movie posters and billboards. Although the methods have changed, the purpose of glorified portrayal remains the same. Celebrities, sports personalities, tech gurus, business tycoons and famous politicians are upheld through various media publications and platforms, as superstars and paragons of success.

In previous centuries, the fame of champions and leaders of society was restricted to their demographic and their stories were spread primarily by word of mouth and sometimes, through limited publications. The fame of these leaders rarely surpassed geographical boundaries. Hence, for centuries, Hercules was only well-known within Greek society and Hanuman was a hero only for Indians. Today, however, the rapid and widespread movement of information enables stars like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan to spread their fame and mastery of Chinese martial arts throughout the world.

In a postmodern global village, the ever-widening reach of the media and popular culture have enabled some individuals to establish worldwide acclaim.



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However, the process and means by which people harness global influence, is not the subject of my discussion today. Rather, I would like to focus on the social implications and impact of this phenomenon, clarifying misconceptions that also arise in this regard.

Through our daily interactions with people, we find that people are largely influenced, consciously or subconsciously, by others. Our first influencers are usually our parents, particularly in the formative stages of physical and spiritual growth. They nurture our values, attitudes and characters. Furthermore, all people are influenced by those that with whom they form relationships and interact with. Hence, a child often behaves like his parents, friends often share the same likes and dislikes, spouses pick up habits from each other and students learn from their teachers. We also aspire to be like those whom we value and respect.

To explore the influences of society on character formation, I invite you to participate in a small exercise. You will need a piece of paper to note down your thoughts and answers.

Firstly, make a list of people who have influenced you in your life journey so far. Write a few words to describe each influencer.

It is important to remember that those who influence us may do so in positive and negative ways. To help you identify who has influenced you in your life and the impact they have had on you, please answer the following questions:

1. Who has influenced you?
2. How have he/she influenced you?
3. Clearly jot down the traits you may have picked up from them
4. What habits do you have and from whom have you picked up those habits?
5. Who do you aspire to be like and follow?

Upon answering the above questions and reflecting upon your answers, you will better understand the impact of influencers in your life. It is important to realise that following the example of others and selecting models of aspiration are critical choices we make. Having been granted free will from Allah (swt), we choose role models as acts of volition. Hence, we are also responsible for the positive or negative impact these choices have on our character development and life decisions. When we take a step back and analyse our lives objectively, we realise that whilst we may not fully control our surroundings and the situations we find ourselves in, we do control how we behave and react within our circumstances and situation.

Let us consider closely the impact of role models on behaviour. According to a survey conducted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers in the United Kingdom, young people frequently choose sports stars as role models. Pop stars are also frequently looked up to as models of inspiration. Usually, when famous personalities are upheld as role models, their main value and interest lie in their claim to fame. Hence, when a person reveres a famous celebrity, he focuses on the aspects attributed to his fame. He aspires to emulate the celebrity in terms of the art/talent/business that facilitated his fame, the lifestyle and advantages that fame bring him, the wealth he accrues, and so on. He does not consider whether the celebrity

is worthy of emulation in his character and virtues or his responsibilities as a parent, spouse, friend, or member of society. Hence, following celebrities in this way reflects very superficial and shallow value judgements and does not facilitate a person's moral and spiritual growth.

The celebrity culture that surrounds us must be critiqued and assessed from an ethical and rational perspective. We must recognise the moral, psychological and spiritual illnesses that affect many celebrities. The rate of suicide amongst celebrities is higher than amongst average people. Often, celebrities make a lot of money and then squander and lose it. Drug abuse, broken marriages, bankruptcy, mental illnesses, and depression are common. Whilst celebrities may excel in mastering a talent or making money, they may fall short in many other important aspects of life. Before we choose a role model to guide and focus our aspirations, we should first discern what comprises true human success and worth.

Worldly fulfilment, success, victory and happiness are fleeting. Moreover, no amount of money, fame or prosperity can fulfil the needs and longing of the soul. Whilst human beings live in the material dimension, their immaterial soul yearns for a higher existence, deeper meaning, and the actualisation of spiritual values and ideals.

Moreover, if one succeeds in achieving all his material desires, how long will his worldly fulfilment last? Do we live forever? Does not material success perish with death?

What about the next life that is eternal? How does one secure wellbeing in the hereafter if he is absorbed only in pursuing worldly desires? It is vital that every person assesses his purpose and objectives in life in a clear, rational and long-sighted way. He must ask himself how he can secure true and abiding success and happiness.

In the preface to his translation of the Holy Quran, Ali Quli Qarai writes:

'To human beings lacking a sense of divinely ordained purpose and direction in life, like seafarers on an uncharted sea without compass or guidance, the Qur'an offers a delivering vision of life and human destiny, helping them rediscover their destiny and dignity as human beings and recover their true orientation as wayfarers on the Godward path of infinite perfection:

“Certainly We have honoured the Children of Adam, and carried them over land and sea, and provided them with all the good things, and given them advantage over many of those We have created with a complete preference.” [Qur’an 17:70]’

He continues:

‘To a youth languishing on the plane of animal existence, captive of materialistic values and rendered spiritually impotent by sensual pursuits and indifferent to struggle against oppression and injustice, the Qur’an suggests a spiritual diet and a program of spiritual rehabilitation, and self-purification. To a world bewildered by the din of the communication media orchestrated by Satanic forces bent on the deception of thinking minds, the Qur’an gives a light to walk by, enabling the faithful human being to see facts through the apparently impenetrable curtains of deceit and disinformation:

“O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah and have faith in His Apostle. He will grant you a double share of His mercy and give you a light to walk by and forgive you.” [Qur’an 57:28]’

No religion advises people to reject the pursuit of success. Rather, Islam encourages human beings to succeed whilst also providing a clear definition of true success. This definition is based on fulfilling man’s spiritual and moral potential as a divine servant, thereby securing Allah’s (swt) pleasure and eternal bliss in the hereafter. Once a person understands the Islamic definition of success and it takes root deep within his heart, he formulates his world view and models of aspiration around this understanding. It is important to also discern who, according to Islam, is the best guide and example to follow in achieving true success.

Allah (swt) specifies in the Holy Qur’an who the best guide and role model for humanity is:

‘O Prophet! Indeed, We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and as a warner and as a summoner to Allah by His permission, and as a radiant lamp.’ (Qur’an 33:45-46)

In the struggle of life, when we reach our lowest point, we may feel we are surrounded by darkness and confusion. In darkness, we cannot discern a desired destination, nor can we work out how to get there. It is only by following the light of the Holy Prophet (s) who is a ‘radiant lamp’ (Qur’an 33:46), that we can be guided out of our darkness and ignorance. To those who follow sincerely the guidance and example of the Holy Prophet (s), Allah (swt) promises:

‘...He brings them out of darkness into light.’ [Qur’an 2:257]

The Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s), has been sent as a perfect example and role model for humanity to follow. We should follow his footsteps, emulate his character, and live by his teachings. It is only the most perfect human being and servant of Allah (swt) who can guide us to traverse the path to Allah’s (swt) pleasure and proximity in the best way. Only someone who has fully submitted his life and soul to the love and obedience of Allah (swt), can guide and command others to achieve the same.

All human beings who are not chosen Infallibles, are on a journey of self-discovery and prone to make mistakes. It is only Muhammad (s) who has made the journey to the heavens and visited Allah (swt) on His throne and it is only he who is able and has the authority to guide us on our path to true success. As Allah (swt) confirms in the Holy Qur’an:

‘By the star when it sets, your companion [the Holy Prophet] has neither gone astray, nor gone amiss. Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire, it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him], taught him by One of great powers, possessed of sound judgement, He settled, while he was on the highest horizon. Then he drew nearer and nearer until he was within two bows’ length or even nearer, whereat He revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.’

I urge you to read the passage above again, slowly and carefully. Understanding the divine message in these verses is critical to understanding the role of the Holy Prophet (s) in being the divinely ordained, perfect and absolute guide for humanity.

If possible, listen to the first ten verses of Surat al-Najm before you continue reading. Let the recitation and meaning of these verses resonate and settle within your soul. Reflect upon and understand the lofty and unparalleled spiritual station held by the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s).

In another verse, Allah (swt) confirms:

‘In the Apostle of Allah there is certainly for you a good exemplar, for those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah greatly.’ [Qur’an 33:21]

During his life, the Holy Prophet (s) was the mecca of all existence and humanity turned to him for spiritual guidance, understanding, learning, and salvation. The descendants of Banu Qayla, the tribes of Banu Aws and Banu Khazraj, and people of various tribes and places were drawn to Islam through their respect and love for the Holy Prophet (s). It was through the beautiful example and guidance of the Holy Prophet (s), that the following promise of Allah (swt) was fulfilled:

‘And you see the people entering Allah’s religion in throngs.’ (Qur’an 10:2)

As the Ka’ba is the focal point of ritual worship in Islam, so is Muhammad (s) the spiritual heart, example and leader of the Muslims. During his life, the words he uttered were recorded and became sacred traditions and advice to be followed. His actions served as guidance to be emulated. The Holy Prophet (s) was revered by his followers as the greatest human being in existence and the most beloved servant of God.

Towards the end of his life, the Holy Prophet (s) performed his final Hajj pilgrimage. After completing the rites of pilgrimage and on his return journey to Medina, he stopped with his followers at Ghadir Khum.

Almost one hundred thousand followers gathered around the Holy Prophet (s) including those who had proceeded ahead but were commanded to return and those who had lagged behind but were allowed to catch up. On the 18th day of Dhul Hijjah, the Holy Prophet (s) asked a makeshift pulpit to be erected. He then stood on the pulpit and gave a lengthy speech. Within the speech, the Holy Prophet (s) recited the following verse revealed to him by Allah (swt):

‘O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the faithless lot.’ (Qur’an 5:67)

Prophet Muhammad (s) also asked the people before him:

‘Do you not bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Apostle, and that His Heaven is true, His Hell is true, death is true, the Resurrection after death is true, that there is no doubt that the Day of Judgment will come, and that Allah will resurrect the dead from their graves?’

They people replied, ‘Yes, we bear witness,’ to which the Holy Prophet (s) responded, ‘O Allah, bear witness.’

The Holy Prophet (s) then stated:

‘O people, Allah is my Lord and I am the lord of the believers. I am worthier to believers than they are to themselves. Of whomsoever I have been the master, this Ali is also his master. O Allah, be a supporter of whoever supports him [Ali] and an enemy of whoever opposes him and divert the truth to Ali.’

‘O people, I will go ahead of you and you will arrive at my Pond [in Heaven] which is wider than the distance between Basra and San’a. It has receptacles as numerous as the stars and two cups of gold and two of silver. I will ask you about the two weighty things that I have left for you when you come to me, to see how you dealt with them. The greater weighty thing is Allah’s book - the Holy Qur’an.

One end is in Allah's hand and the other is in your hands. Keep it and you will not deviate. That other weighty thing is my family [Ahl al-Bayt] and my descendants. The Most Kind, the Omniscient, has told me that both will not separate from each other until they come to my Pond.'

Within this final speech during his return from the farewell Hajj, the Holy Prophet (s) designated Imam Ali (as) to be the spiritual guide and role model for believers after his death. Just as the Holy Prophet (s) was appointed by Allah (swt) to be the leader of the Muslims, so too was Imam Ali (as) appointed by Allah's (swt) command to be the Holy Prophet's (s) successor.

Hence, the provision of a divinely appointed exemplar did not end with Muhammad's (s) demise; rather, it continued in the leadership of Imam Ali (as) and his progeny through the ages. True and perfect role models are divinely appointed and guided and do not differ from each other in the essence of their character, values and message. This divine principle is clearly represented by the holy progeny of the Holy Prophet (s); all the Imams (as) were pure reflections and transmitters of the light of Muhammad (s).

All Imams (as) were infallible and hence, able to perfectly and fully perform uphold their divine station and responsibilities. They illuminated the way for all those who seek to follow the path of truth and gain proximity to Allah (swt). Although Imam al-Mahdi (af), the Imam of our time, is not physically present with us, he still fulfils his divine role of leading and guiding the ummah. Like the sun behind the clouds, Imam al-Mahdi's (af) light may seem hidden but it continues to sustain the spiritual life of believers and illuminate their path to Allah (swt).

The Holy Prophet (s) and all the Imams (as) guide us in contemporary times through their teachings and example, as preserved in the books of history and tradition. Their actions and example in varying situations, trials, adversities and relationships serve as perfect models of faith, behaviour and decision-making for all time. The universalisation and culmination of this system of divine guidance will be reached when Imam al-Mahdi (af) reappears and establishes his divine rule and spiritual authority over the entire global community.



THE SEA

At the edge of the sea,
I stand,
Still

Awed
By her luminescence,
Azure translucence
A blue infused,
Consumed,
Subsumed
By the Immanent

I gaze
Into infinity,
Seamless perennity
No beginning, no end,
Passing time, fading sequence,
Only eternal, abiding
Presence

I sense
A depth and breadth
Of Love so immense,
I know,
No parched soul drenched
Remains unquenched

And so, I'm drawn
By Love's irresistible tide
Gently pulling me nigh,
Beauty and grace divine
Tugging at my knotted inside

How I yearn
To spurn
My dark, shadowy plight,
Dive into the light!

And yet,
I pause.

Between distraction and devotion,
Caprice and conviction,
Earth and Heaven,
I'm torn

Am I willing to commit
Every fibre of my spirit
To truth and virtue alone?
Will I abandon
Desires wanton,
To truly transcend
My selfish self?

Only then,
Can I be
A drop in the sea,
At one
With Love,
Beauty,
He

Q&A

This is where our contributors and editors answer your questions, so please keep sending them to alwarith@imamhussain-lib.com

Q How does Islam make us better human beings?

A Islam sees human beings as endowed with the potential to reach the highest levels of perfection and as such charts a path for them to reach that perfection.

If someone is able to understand and practice the teachings of Islam, it will enable them to rise above their current situation and pursue a path of purity, balance, sincerity, and righteousness, through purification of the heart and the development of the illuminated intellect.

But a human's responsibility to better themselves in Islam is not all that makes them better human beings. They also have a responsibility to help those around them and society at large.

By improving themselves and having a positive effect on those around them they secure happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Q Why do women have to wear hijab and men do not, whereas both are commanded to cast down their eyes? Women may be beautiful but are there not facets of men that are attractive to the opposite sex? What about a man as handsome as Prophet Yusuf (as)?

A There are a number of points that need to be understood before entering into a discussion on the philosophy of why women are ordered to wear hijab and men are not required to cover their bodies in the same way. The first is that Islamic rules are based on the scriptural literature (Quran and hadith) and if there is no way to prove a restriction on clothing for men from that literature, then it is not valid to rule in favour of those restrictions. It is possible to re-examine the rules and perhaps with that re-examination another ruling may be arrived at. The ultimate wisdom behind the rulings cannot be known in their entirety unless that has also been explained in the scriptural literature. With regard to this question the reason as to why men, while they may be aspects of their physical appearance that may be attractive to women, are not required to wear an outward covering, is ultimately unknown. That being said, women are generally speaking are physically more attractive than men, and with that premise the wisdom for a general rule for hijab makes sense, whereas a male as attractive as Prophet Yusuf (as) is something much rarer.

Open Question

What is the best way to communicate the values of Islam to non-Muslims?



THE BATOOL (AS) FOUNDATION
مؤسسة البتول عليها السلام

*Please send contributions for all future issues, comments and questions to:
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